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ABSTRACT

Time management principles can help teachers become more aware of ways in which time can be used to the greatest advantage. An exploration of personal time perspectives is a step toward establishing effective patterns of behavior. Productivity may be high in the morning and low in the late afternoon, for example, and organizing some activities to fit these energy curves relieves stress and permits a balance of personal and professional needs. In setting realistic and attainable goals, time may be used to develop actions and plans for achieving them. Since much of the school environment is time-governed or time-bound, it is important to know which aspects of school life and school time cannot be controlled. Working within these constraints and eliminating interruptions during controlled school time produces a more effective use of time. It is important to plan and to understand personal priorities, and to follow through on these priorities before accepting new responsibilities. Knowing and using the support system available is essential in accomplishing work that must be done. Other supportive teachers, secretaries, principals, students, or parents are essential for good time management. Other suggestions for wise use of time are: concentration on the task at hand, learning not to procrastinate, and following through and finishing projects. A time management check-list is included. Three time management activities, designed to pinpoint areas of time waste, procrastination, and priority organization, are appended. (JD)

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Time Management For Educators

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Time Management for Educators

Do you feel frustrated because you can't accomplish what you want to or need to? Do you think you are not making progress toward your goals? Do you feel like you have no free time? Do you feel rushed all of the time? If you answered yes to these questions, then you are having problems with time management, and these problems are causing stress.

Time structures our work environment and guides our daily activities. We often protest the way our lives are scheduled and directed by the clock and yet we mismanage the time we do have. There are two main objectives of time management. First, we want to control the use of our time and not let time control us. Second, we want to be effective managers of our personal and professional lives.

Eight time management principles are provided here to help us become more aware of our own uses of time and to help us use our time more wisely. Many of these principles are reviewed by Applegate (1980) and Lakein (1973).

Eight Time Management Principles

1. Know Yourself. The first step toward understanding how you use time is to look closely at yourself. You need to understand your values, needs, beliefs, attitudes, and habits in relation to time. If a discrepency exists between your needs and your use of time, it may point to a source of your personal and professional frustration. Ask yourself what is the most satisfying part of your job and consider if you devote enough time to that part.

Explore your own time perspectives. Thomas Cottle (1976) suggests that people have different perspectives of time which may affect their behavior. You may be a part-, present-, or future-focused person and this will play a role in guiding and directing your actions.

Know your personal time needs. Some people work best in the morning, others in the late afternoon, still others late in the evening. Productivity can be heightened if you understand your periods of highs and lows.

Use your time well. Plan personal time into your schedule -- time to read, exercise, relax, or socialize. This personal time will help relieve stress that you might be experiencing and also will permit a balance of personal and professional needs.

2. Set Goals. Knowing what you want to do and why you want to do it are the first steps toward getting done those things which you will find personally and professional rewarding. We often prefer to think that events or activities just happen to us and the best we can do is react to situations. We can make things happen for ourselves and others by knowing and understanding ourselves. We can have control over our lives.

It would be useful to examine your personal and professional lifetime goals to see the degree of compatability or conflict in these goals. You may need to adjust your goals or activities if there are conflicts.

Once you examine your goals, you need to consider how much time and energy is needed to resolve any conflicts in the goals. You could develop an action plan to resolve these conflicts.

Set realistic, attainable goals. You open yourself up for much hard work and possible frustration if you set goals that are too high. You must decide what goals are worth your time and then weigh the advantages of goal attainment against the disadvantages of frustration or disappointment.

3. Know Your Work Environment. Since much of your school environment is time-governed or time-bound, it is important to know which aspects of school life

and school time can and cannot be controlled. The uniform and predictable nature of clock time shapes and directs the work environment. Temporal aspects of the school year, the school week, the day, the grading period, and the daily schedule are all regulated. Educators seem to have few problems coping with these time standards.

Since you need to work within regulated time units, eliminate as many interruptions as you can to make the most productive use of this time. Next use this uninterrupted time to its fullest.

4. Plan. Planning means establishing a record of expectations for yourself and those persons for whom you are responsible. Planning can create or solve time problems. Consider the flow of activities and the integration of sets of goals into the larger picture of your life's goals. The wise use of time remains a problem for many educators.

Before you plan, you need to understand your priorities. You need to know what is important to you, the students, and the school.

Once you have established priorities, you will not be able to follow through with them unless you learn to say no. Consider your use of time and your goal priorities before accepting new responsibilities. Planning purposefully can contribute to the integration of your personal and professional achievements.

Without expressions of intent, you will allow other people's actions to determine your priorities and you will find yourself dealing primarily with problems rather than opportunities. Time management studies show that the more time you spend on advanced planning, the less total time required for the completion of the project.

5. Know Your Support System. Educators often feel that their work must be done alone and that professional autonomy must be maintained. At the same

time these educators often wish others would be willing to discuss problems, suggest alternatives, and provide advise and assistance.

Good time managers don't feel that they have to do it all. They consciously identify and use support that is available. Collegial support can be beneficial to educators and can lead to wiser use of time.

Good time managers also create their own support systems. There are times when supportive teachers, secretaries, principals, students, or parents are essential to your personal and professional well-being.

6. Concentrate On What You Want To Do. The amount of time an educator spends on a task is not always what counts; the wise use of uninterrupted time can be more important. Educators must be able to concentrate on their tasks to make the most of their time.

Educators must make provisions for work space and uninterrupted work time so that they can concentrate on their tasks. Sometimes going to work an hour early or staying an hour later provides the uninterrupted time educators need. An uncluttered work space also allows you to be more organized and efficient.

Paperwork is a part of every educator's work and should be planned for. Establish a routine so that some time is set aside each day for dealing with job-related paperwork.

7. Act -- Don't Procrastinate, Don't Delay. When tasks need to be completed, educators sometimes find other things to do. Lakein, a time management expert, points to seven common escapes for not doing what we probably should do (Lakein, 1973, pp. 143-45).

A. Indulging yourself -- escaping from your work by first doing something you enjoy.

B. Socializing -- talking to others at work, talking on telephone.

C. Reading -- reading papers, magazines, journals, reports that you have been meaning to get to.

D. Doing it yourself -- doing tasks that could be completed by someone else.

E. Overdoing it -- going to excess in the performance of certain tasks at the expense of the completion of other tasks.

F. Running away -- getting away from the tasks by going to another work area or taking an extra break.

These procrastinating devices can be beneficial to you and sometimes they are needed. They also can become troublesome when you use them to avoid other tasks.

Sometimes we put things off or put them aside because there are no guarantees of success at the end of the project. If projects are so big that it is hard to see how they might be completed, break up the project into small steps and tackle them one at a time.

8. Follow Through -- Finish. Sometimes tasks or projects that are begun are never completed. Educators are well-intentioned and yet they say "I just don't have the time." What actually happens is that they didn't use their time to meet the goals they value the most -- other priorities interfered with them. Once tasks are completed, look positively at what you have done.

If you manage your time wisely, your good ideas and actions will not be lost. Build upon your past experiences. They can be preserved, built upon, and modified.

Self-discipline is important when finishing tasks. Break a large project up into several smaller units and reward yourself when each smaller unit is completed. You also should analyze reasons why you might be procrastinating.

Conclusion

Time use is personal. No one else may see or use time in the way that you do. Once you know what you want to accomplish and have considered the constraints of your work environment and your role, you will be able to set priorities and plan realistically to accomplish your goals.

Put the time management principles offered here into practice but recognize that changes may come slowly. Don't expect to suddenly find large amounts of free time because you are trying out new behavior and management styles. Eventually you will have better control over the use of your time and you will be a more effective manager of your personal and professional life.

TIME MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY #1

Time Wasters

A crucial step in time management is to recognize the time wasters in your activities. List below the time wasters you face (they may be self-influenced or organizationally influenced).

Your biggest outside-influenced time wasters	Ideas on how you could reduce or eliminate these
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

Your biggest self-influenced time wasters	
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

TIME MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY #2

Reducing Procrastination

Your biggest causes of procrastination are:	Ideas on how you could reduce or eliminate these:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

TIME MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY #3

Prioritizing Activities That Result in Outcomes

Effective time managers think in terms of outcomes, not activities. Your desired outcomes are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

One vital aspect of time management is prioritization -- the assuring that those activities which most directly result in outcomes are accomplished effectively. To help identify these activities, list below all the major activities that are performed by anyone in your area of responsibility. Be specific as possible.

1. 13.
2. 14.
3. 15.
4. 16.
5. 17.
6. 18.
7. 19.
8. 20.
9. 21.
10. 22.
11. 23.
12. 24.

From the list above, choose and place in rank order the ten most vital activities that result in outcomes.

1. 6.
2. 7.
3. 8.
4. 9.
5. 10.

Additional Suggestions

Secretarial Personnel

1. Do all you can to save secretarial time until it cuts into your productivity. (e.g. prioritize for them, but they look up the zip codes)

2. Talk to secretaries. Explain goals, priorities, and share plans in brief. Then ask his/her suggestions and help.

3. In general, do work that requires secretarial follow-up (typing, copying) before tasks that don't (phone calls, meetings, etc.)

4. Encourage secretaries to ask on anything they're not sure of. Guessing costs effectiveness through inaccuracy, plus time in re-doing.

5. Encourage secretaries to suggest streamlining or eliminating. Often they see things managers don't.

6. Check with secretaries in advance of deadlines to assure it will be met. Avoid last minute crises.

7. Tell secretary when important or big job is coming up. ("On Nov. 4 I will need 4 hours of your time for a report. Please schedule this into your work load for that day.")

8. In delegating and communicating with employees, assure:
   A. Clarity
   B. Specificity -- quantity, quality, time line, and method
   C. Resources -- time, material, authority
   D. Accountability -- be supportive yet firm about results

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* Especially recommended